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INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204-2797

JOSEPH E. KERNAN
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***Kernan announces state support for local
advanced manufacturing efforts,
highlights Indiana@Work***

Gov. Joe Kernan today announced a state grant to help put Hoosiers to work in East Central Indiana.

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development has awarded \$258,822 to the East Central Workforce Investment Board (WIB), Inc., from the agency's "Energizing Indiana's Workforce" grant funds. The East Central WIB, representing Blackford, Delaware, Henry, Jay and Randolph counties, will use its grant to increase the region's capacity to develop and attract advanced manufacturing jobs.

"Manufacturing has always played a critical role in our economy, and as we move forward, *advanced* manufacturing will play an equally important role," Kernan said during the announcement at **Muncie's Keihin Aircon North America, Inc.** "As our economy continues this transition to higher-tech employment, we must prepare our workforce to meet the needs of employers and compete for jobs."

With the grant, the East Central WIB will create more awareness of career opportunities and the educational requirements needed to be successful in the advanced manufacturing field. Working with Ivy Tech State College, the board will improve its distance learning system and upgrade local WorkOne computer labs to create virtual campuses and learning labs in rural communities, bringing training opportunities closer to the area's workforce.

Muncie and New Castle area vocational schools will also receive assistance to expand the ability to train teenagers and adults in skills identified as important by area employers. In addition, a portion of the grant will be utilized to train 60 individuals to meet employer demands.

"Through the efforts of our departments of Workforce Development and Commerce, Indiana has consistently focused on improving the skills of our workers," Kernan said. "And today, we have yet another tool to assist them, as well as our businesses across the state - Indiana@Work."

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Kernan announced the creation of Indiana@Work during his State of the State address in January. A joint effort of DWD and Commerce, it aims to match jobseekers with companies that have openings. It provides training funds to businesses, for potential employees who are facing a “skills gap” that could keep them from attaining higher-pay jobs. And, eventually, Indiana@Work will help workers develop “e-resumes” that they can carry with them throughout their careers.

“In today's highly competitive global economy, the quality of one's workforce can make or break any company,” said Mike Mitsch, plant manager for Keihin Aircon. “That's why maintaining and developing a workforce through training is so critical, and why Keihin Aircon places such emphasis on it. We are excited about the new workforce development tools being offered and are excited about their potential.”

For more information on Indiana@Work, Energizing Indiana's Workforce or other DWD-related programs, visit DWD's Web site at www.workforce.IN.gov.

*Reporters' contacts: Tina Noel or Jonathan Swain, 317-232-4578
Jeff Harris, DWD, 317-232-3396*